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'KGB at doorstep,' Paris paper warns

By Andrew Borowiec
THE WASHINGTON TIMES FOREIGN SERVICE

PARIS — A 35-year-old investigative reporter rattled the French political establishment this weekend by announcing that Soviet KGB agents have penetrated every facet of the nation's life. "The KGB is at your doorstep," bannered the popular Sunday paper "Le Journal du Dimanche."

The revelation by Thierry Wolton, a staff member of the conservative French weekly "Le Point," was regarded as a bombshell by politicians looking toward crucial legislative elections that are expected to unseat the Socialist majority two months from now.

French newspapers and the state television quickly picked up on Mr. Wolton's book "The KGB in France."

Contacted by The Washington Times, Mr. Wolton said that all available copies of his book had been snapped up Friday and Saturday. "I have nothing more to add, everything I know is there," he said.

The accusations are chilling to French politicians of all stripes.

In short, Mr. Wolton claims that there are few secrets in France to the Kremlin, that KGB agents have reasonably detailed information about what goes on in the presidential palace, the office of the prime minister, in the Ministry of Exterior (foreign) Affairs and of defense.

He identified the Soviet spy networks in France as using the codenames of "Zenith," "Elint" and "Residence" and said most of their key agents occupy three floors in the Soviet Embassy building at 40 Boulevard Lannes which he described as a "veritable bunker" insulated against electronic monitoring and where even the use of typeweriters is banned and all agents write their reports in longhand.

According to Mr. Wolton, the Soviet agents who analyze the collected information work in a large room where desks are separated by transparent plastic partitions. The secretaries are wives of senior KGB officials who watch every move of the agents, most of whom belong to "Section PR," which gathers political intelligence and puts out disinformation, and "Line X," which he identified as scientific and technological espionage.

The walls of this Soviet intelligence hideout, according to the French journalist, are lined with photographs of French security agents as well as of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) officers assigned to France.

The roof of the building is covered by electronic equipment capable of monitoring communications by satellite and having access to a large portion of the Paris telephone network.

Thus, Mr. Wolton claims, the KGB in Paris is capable of relaying to Moscow conversations between the presidential palace and key ministries. The KGB machinery in Paris is also capable of breaking into a number of government and private computer systems, he said.

In his book, Mr. Wolton also claims that Paris is riddled with hundreds of Soviet agents camouflaged under myriad covers. The book has an appendix identifying firms with addresses and telephone number which according to the author serve either as "mail boxes" or other KGB offices.

For example, among those named are the "Black Sea and Baltic General Insurance" at 4 rue D'Argenson, or the maritime agency "Sagmar" at 36 rue Brunel (telephone 45-74-96-24).

Appearing on the Friday night television show "Apostrophes," Mr. Wolton sucked on his pipe and elaborated:

"The Soviet secret services have infiltrated our country. They manipulate officers and high officials. No political party can challenge my book because all have something to hide."

Mr. Wolton started his investigation following the expulsion from Paris of 47 Soviet "diplomats" in April 1983 on charges of spying. It was not immediately clear how he managed to obtain detailed descriptions of the KGB setup in Paris and of its various adjuncts.

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